



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

compared only to the Biblical, or to Swedenborg's works. I will venture to add a prophecy, however, that from my time on it will have become impossible to work on Plotinus in any way other than comparatively, in the light of his Numenian origin and Nicean fruitage.

As soon as I have completed my New Testament work, I shall gladly return to the discussion of interesting translation problems in Plotinus and thus demonstrate the honesty of my attempts.

KENNETH SYLVAN GUTHRIE.

NEW YORK.

REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

The Letters of William James. Edited by his son, HENRY JAMES. Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press. 1920. 2 vols. Pp. x + 348, xii + 382.

During the later years of James's life a young student who was a stranger to me came into my office with the question: "I have just heard that Professor James is ill. Do you know whether this is so?" "Yes," I said, "I'm afraid it is." And then, my curiosity roused by the solicitude in her manner, I asked, "Why? Is he a relative, or do you know him?" "I've been studying his *Psychology*," was her answer. It was the first time in my experience that a student had ever shown interest in the health of the author of a text-book. William James was a real personality to thousands of readers of the *Briefer Course*, or the *Varieties*, or the *Pragmatism*. If you were disposed to agree with what you read it was partly because you somehow felt that so ardent and sincere a spirit must be expressing some truth, just because he was expressing himself—and he was so immensely worth while. And if, distrustful of the adequacy of any formal tests where we confront ultimate issues, we are tempted to believe that a philosopher's vision may be at least as important as his logic, and that this vision may in turn be quickened and extended by a certain sensitiveness and largeness of soul, it is hard to resist the conviction that such a vital, many-sided, open-minded, and eager inquirer must be an interpreter that deserves a hearing.

These *Letters* bring back the man, William James, to those who were fortunate enough to have known him by voice and presence; they will help to make more real the personality behind the published writings, even for those who like my young undergraduate knew him only through these, and thereby will contribute to a truer perspective and estimate of his philosophy.

What was this man who wrote himself so prodigally—to his own family and to colleagues naturally—but also to young adventurers in philosophy and to intimates, both men and women, of various professions and temperaments?

A group of friends were trying to answer this question. "To me," said one, "he seems to have been not a metaphysician, nor perhaps even a scientist. He was first, last, and always an artist. His early fondness for drawing and painting which nearly determined his career was but an indication of his true interest. It was the artistic *flair* which led him into this and that unexplored avenue, and projected a pluralistic system. His comment in the concluding letter of the volumes, upon criticism which had pointed out inward incoherence in his total scheme, was that the criticism was not "live"; it failed to grasp "his center of vision, by an act of imagination." Again it was only the dramatic or heroic that kindled any social interest, so far as these letters disclose such interest. The Dreyfus case and the war in the Philippines are practically the only causes that appear. His physical condition did not permit him to enter the Civil War, but the letters record no feeling of a stake in its issues, except for the allusion to Lincoln, "the representative of pure, simple human nature against all conventional additions"—surely an artist's empathy. The great industrial and social changes through which America was passing in his prime have likewise little or no reflection in these outpourings of himself. He was an artist."

"At any rate," said another, "he was scientist in this, which impressed me as the essence of his spirit: he was always keen for reality, for actual experience. This passion burns in his early letter to his mother on his choice of a career. 'On the one side is science, upon the other business . . . with medicine . . . between them. . . I fear there might be some anguish in looking back from the pinnacle of prosperity (*necessarily* reached, if not by eating dirt, at least by renouncing some divine ambrosia) over the life you might have led in the pure pursuit of truth. It seems as if one could not afford to give that up for any bribe, however great.' This eagerness for close contact with reality led him—intrigued as he was, even then, by general philosophic problems—into biology and psychology. It drew him into byways, barred by official guardians of scientific conventions, if possibly he might hit upon some trail to a new fact. It leads even to his scornful comment upon 'scientists' as authorities upon the total nature of reality (II. 270). It underlies his problem in his Gifford lectures, as he states it (II. 127) 'to defend (against all the prejudices of my "class") "experience" against "philosophy" as being the real backbone of the world's

religious life.' It is found in the advice to a young writer which closes the volume: 'May I urge . . . that you should now . . . devote your great talents to the study of reality in its concreteness.'"

"In this connection," remarked a third, "I have been surprised to find so little of what is often supposed to be James's pragmatism, that is anti-intellectualism, and the will to believe. He appears to be as singleminded in his passion for truth as any intellectualist. For example, in his letter to Schiller: 'Why not simply express ourselves positively, and trust that the true view quietly will replace the other.' His criticism on Royce was 'looseness of thought'; 'he is the Rubens of philosophy.' His comments on others and replies to criticism upon himself are addressed to reason, even when they argue that it is rational to admit that we all have some bias. Particularly in point as showing the openness of his mind, even to the absolutist point of view, is his perplexity about the Parthenon: 'There is a mystery of *rightness* about that Parthenon that I can not understand. It sets a standard for other human things, showing that absolute rightness is not out of reach.' His cry of relief when released from his professorship was, 'To be alone with truth and God!'"

"I suppose," said a fourth, "that having been struck early in the *Letters* by the practical or ethical significance to James of his philosophical problems, notably those of freedom, and the existence of evil, it was explicable that I should have found in this the main spring of his thinking. The day when he adopted Renouvier's conception of Free Will 'was a crisis in my life.' It came at a time of general mental depression in which suicide had 'seemed the most manly form to put my daring into.' His giving up the notion that all mental disorder requires to have a physical basis, ' . . . that the mind does act irrespectively of material coercion and could be dealt with therefore at first hand . . . was health to his bones.' He pioneered his own way into the thick of things: 'I'm swamped in an empirical philosophy. I feel that we are nature through and through, that we are wholly conditioned, . . . and yet notwithstanding, we are *en rapport* with reason. . . . How to conceive it? Who knows? . . . We shall see, damn it, we shall see.' Later this issue broadened to the moral problem of the *Dilemma of Determinism* and flashes boldly out in the letter to Hodgson: 'Indeterminism is the only way to *break* the world into good parts and into bad, and to stand by the former as against the latter.' As for the distinction which Hodgson has sought to make: 'What living man cares for such niceties, when the real problem stares him in the face, of how practically to meet a world foredone, with no possibilities left in it' (I, 244). Religion meant to him as most im-

portant, 'the social appeal for corroboration, consolation, *etc.*, when things are going wrong with my causes (my truth denied), *etc.*' (II, 213). The deepest reason for pluralism, tychism—anything but absolutistic monism—was the moral one. 'Life is evil.' And if all is implied in the molecules of the nebula, 'With what can I side in such a world as this, this monstrous indifference which brings everything *eodem jure*? Our nature demands something *objective* to take sides with. If the world is a Unit of this sort, there are no sides—there's the moral rub' (I, 446). His objection to an 'ideal' God is that 'Ideals ought to aim at the *transformation* of *reality*—no less!' 'I do not believe it to be healthy minded to nurse the notion that ideals are self-sufficient, and require no actualization to make us content.' "

"I don't profess to have an explanation for James's philosophy, or even a key-note," remarked another, "but I was caught by the irrepressible, spontaneous whimsicalities and humor that bubbled over in certain letters, and the utter frankness and profound seriousness which made other letters human documents. From the early raillery of the family letters, through such delicious nonsense as appears in the communication to Henry Higginson anent finances, or in that to Henry Holt where the Mark Twain twist gets an extra turn from the spelling—'You should hear my wife swear when she hears your name'—on to the final signature, 'Yours with mingled admiration and abhorrence,' the humor is always ready when the time and the person offer the fit occasion. There are frank comments upon contemporaries, sometimes not complimentary, but utterly without malice. There are tears too in their place, and exquisite self-revelations, as in the description of the night in the Adirondacks. There is a world of wisdom packed into the letter to his thirteen-year-old daughter. And where can one come nearer to first and last things than in the last letters written to his sister and father?"

"Is it not possible that it is in these various impressions rather than in any one exclusively that we have the most adequate reflection of the man?" resumed one of the group who had already expressed himself. "He was certainly artist; he was certainly the open-minded and passionate lover of truth; he craved contacts with concrete immediate facts; he was no looker-on in this theater of man's life but was as eager to champion his views as to explore; but he was none of these to the exclusion of the rest. He was artist, explorer, truth-lover, religionist, champion of the weaker side, warm friend, frank critic—in short, he came near to combining traits which in most men are not found in the same personality."

William James, the man, who shows himself so unreservedly in

his friendships, his interests, his appraisals, his aversions, his work, and his recreations, ought to be a convincing witness against some misconceptions of his philosophy, in so far as these have been genuine and not merely captious. Those critics whose interpretations have been due to the exigencies of controversy will doubtless not be convinced though one rise from the dead.

The most serious misconception has been that when James said "practical" he meant it in the narrowest possible sense, as excluding imagination, science, friendship, and religion, instead of as he defined it, the "concrete, the individual, particular, and effective." James spoke of "cash values" and it has been assumed that by "cash values" he must have meant money or things that money can buy. The difficulty seems to have been that James gave his hearers and readers credit for more imagination than they possessed. The letter to his mother on his choice of a profession, and the consistent idealism of his whole career, are the best commentaries upon what he considered to be "cash values." More excusable, perhaps, is the difficulty felt by many in his hard saying that the "right" is only the expedient in the way of behaving. The word "expedient" undoubtedly conveys the meaning of adapting ourselves to things, instead of changing things to make them conform to our standards and ideals. If any one takes a certain type of religious view, or naturalist view, or metaphysical view, then for him the universe is all as it should be, and to adapt ourselves to it is not only prudent but moral. Providence or Nature or Reality is the standard; to adjust our conduct to this standard is our duty; the expedient is the right. But this was not James. The whole point of his philosophy and the whole spirit of his life was that we should change reality—not merely accept it or float with the current. "Our philosophies swell the current of being, add their character to it. Our thoughts determine our acts, and our acts re-determine the previous nature of the world."

Another form of this misunderstanding has been to identify James's philosophy with utilitarianism, because he dwelt so much on the use of truth or of religion. But in the sense in which utilitarianism measures rightness by consequences solely and reckons these consequences only in pleasure or pain, James had definitely rejected this in his essay, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life." "The nobler things *taste* better, and that is all that we can say," and if we were offered a world of millions "kept permanently happy on the one simple condition that a certain lost soul on the far-off edge of things should lead a life of lonely torture," we should immediately feel "how hideous a thing would be its enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain."

The life that is disclosed in the letters was likewise a far remove from the typical utilitarian method. It was one of immediate reactions and intuitive appraisals, rather than of calculation. There was a romantic adventurous element in it that took risks. But finally if literal souls want chapter and verse for his conception of "success" and "cash," and for his own belief in "abstract" justice, let them read the letter to Wells (II,269): "Exactly that callousness to abstract justice is *the* sinister feature, and, to me as well as to you, the incomprehensible feature, of our U. S. civilization." To tone down flagrant abuses and breed excuses for offenders from a general fund of optimism and respect for expediency is "understandable in onlooking citizens only as a symptom of the moral flabbiness born of the exclusive worship of the bitch-goddess SUCCESS. That—with the squalid cash interpretation put on the word success—is our national disease. Hit it hard!"

Less important than misconceptions of James's moral attitudes was the charge of subjectivism. The letter to Dickinson Miller which has the illustration of the cast of beans on a table, makes his position unmistakable on this point.

To explain the infrequency of reference to public affairs or social problems, aside from the artist or the knight errant in James which was stirred chiefly by the dramatic or enlisted him to champion the under-dog, we find numerous indications of an individualism both of temper and of principle. He did not like to be organized or standardized, and he expressed the principle in the letter to W. M. Salter (II, 101): "*Every* great institution is perforce a means of corruption—whatever good it may also do. Only in the free personal relation is full ideality to be found."

A truer perspective of James's philosophy as a whole should result from what the letters show to have been his early as well as his later chief interest. For one, I had likened James to Tennyson's Ulysses. The Trojan war was the great enterprise of Ulysses' prime, but, this accomplished, he was not content to rust in peaceful Ithaca, but must fare forth again to seek new worlds. I had conceived the *Psychology* with its nine years' labor not only as the great enterprise, but as the strongest interest, of James's earlier and middle life. I had thought of the philosophy as a later interest, although, to be sure, many of the characteristic notes of that philosophy appear in the volume, *The Will to Believe*, and indeed in the *Psychology* itself. The *Letters* show that the facts were otherwise. When twenty-three, he wrote to his brother Henry from Brazil: "When I get home, I'm going to study philosophy all my days," and to his father, "I am convinced now, for good, that I am cut out for a speculative, rather than an active life."

His letters to Ward, Holmes, and others during his stay in Germany and afterwards show that though he might be studying physiology or psychology, his deepest interest lay in freedom and necessity, mind and body. His study of the specific sciences, so far as it was not dictated by occupational motives, seems to have been largely a matter of philosophic method. "I feel somehow, now," he wrote when twenty-four, "as if I had no right to one opinion on any subject, no right to open my mouth before others until I know some *one* thing as thoroughly as it can be known, no matter how insignificant it may be. After that I shall perhaps be able to think on general subjects." When offered the instructorship in anatomy, he wrote in his diary: "Philosophical activity *as a business* is not normal for most men, and not for me. . . . To make the *form* of all possible thought the prevailing *matter* of one's thought breeds hypochondria. Of course my deepest interest will, as ever, lie with the most general problems." "Religion is the great interest in my life," he wrote in 1897, and his letter to Miller in 1910 even goes to the length of saying, "I'm sorry you stick so much to my psychological phase, which I care little for now, and never cared much. This epistemological and metaphysical phase seems to me more original and more important."

It would be rash to say for which phase later generations will be more thankful, but I hazard the guess that the more scientific aspects will necessarily be affected more by advance in the subject. And this or that particular of his speculations in philosophy will likewise have to stand the test of logical criticism. But in its function as guide of life philosophy makes appeal to other tests as well. It must lure or challenge or quicken. It must, in James's favorite phrase, be a *live* hypothesis. Only the future can say how the future will value James by this criterion, but it seems not fanciful to think that the vivid personality of the man, which radiates in the *Letters*, will add to the vitality of the philosophy. It will kindle in many the passion to have a philosopher's vision—whether that vision is precisely the vision which James himself saw is not the most important thing. He would himself care little for the letter if he could have the spirit—honest, open-minded, sensitive, earnest, and brave.

JAMES H. TUFTS.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

Experimental Studies in Recall and Recognition. EDITH MULHALL
ACHILLES. New York: Archives of Psychology. 1920. Pp.
v + 80.

Dr. Achilles has made an intensive experimental study of recall and recognition, using a variety of materials, such as words, syllable-